



FACT SHEET: FOR IN-HOME CARE WORKERS

28 March 2020

Our health care and in-home care workers are at the frontline of protecting older Australians from COVID-19. It is crucial that we support and protect them.

People who have returned from anywhere overseas, or have been in contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19, are required to self-isolate for 14 days. If you develop symptoms including a fever and cough, you should immediately and urgently seek medical attention.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the 'What you need to know' and 'Isolation guidance' information sheets found at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources

Can I go to work?

Yes, it is safe to go to work as you normally would. However, to keep care recipients safe you must not go to work and alert your employer if:

- You have returned from overseas in the last 14 days,
- You have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or
- You have a fever, or you have any symptoms of respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion).

To continue to provide in-home care, workers must receive the current influenza vaccination by 1 May 2020.

How can I help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

There is currently no vaccination to prevent COVID-19. Avoiding exposure is the single most important way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

You must ensure that you:

- Practise and encourage good hand hygiene and good cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Depending on anticipated exposure, wear appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from home-care recipients and Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) customers, and encourage everyone to do the same.



How do I know what I should be doing differently at work?

A new online training module providing information on COVID-19 infection control has been released by the Government. This includes signs and symptoms of the virus, how to keep safe and myth-busting. All care workers across health, aged care and disability are encouraged to undertake this training www.covid-19training.gov.au

Specific modules will be available for aged care workers supporting care recipients living in the community shortly.

What about workers with visa work restrictions?

New visa arrangements are available now to support the aged care workforce. Aged care providers can now temporarily offer more hours to international students to help ensure the care of older Australians.

These changes apply to both residential and home care.

They are temporary measures and are designed to address any staff shortages caused by COVID-19. We need to support workforce continuity in case a large part of the workforce is unable to come to work. Providers will ensure all staff are adequately trained.

For more information go to www.homeaffairs.gov.au

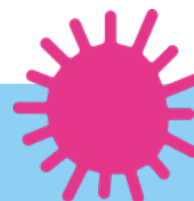
How can clients get urgent access to CHSP or other additional services if their care needs change due to COVID-19?

The delivery of additional services where there is an urgent need (such as meals, nursing, personal care or transport) can already be delivered without an assessment on a time limited basis.

Home care package clients can already access CHSP services on a time limited basis in emergency situations when their package is fully allocated. The service provider assisting the client will still need to contact My Aged Care and register the client. An assessment should be scheduled at a later date where appropriate.

There are potentially two ways that CHSP can support flexibility in service provision to respond to COVID-19:

- Clients (new or existing) can approach service providers directly to change or increase services where there is an urgent need for a health or safety intervention that can be delivered by a service provider. This can include meal delivery services.
- My Aged Care Contact Centre **1800 200 422** can provide direct referrals to CHSP services in urgent circumstances. The services referred to should be:
 - For a one-off intervention (such as transport to a GP appointment)



- For a direct health or safety intervention that needs to occur before a face-to-face assessment can take place (such as for Nursing, Personal Care or Meals).

In the above situations, the Department would expect CHSP providers to only deliver services they are funded to deliver (e.g. they cannot start delivering domestic assistance when they are only funded for respite).

What should I advise my staff in these challenging times?

One of the important messages is the value of basic standard hygiene (hand washing, cough etiquette, social distancing) in preventing transmission.

As trusted care providers in our community, your assistance in communicating this message to your workforce, senior Australians, their families and friends is appreciated.

Employers should provide information and brief all employees, contract staff and volunteers, including domestic and cleaning staff where applicable, on relevant information and procedures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

You should inform staff who have been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case to remain isolated in their home. Workers should seek medical advice and advise their employer if they develop symptoms during the isolation period..

Public health authorities may contact employers in the event an employee, contract staff or volunteer is confirmed to have coronavirus.

Will I have access to Government payments if I can't go to work?

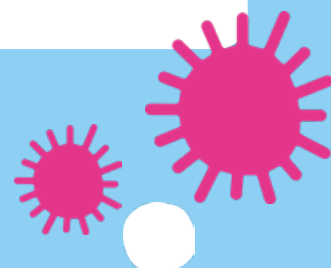
Workers who are unable to attend work because they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who are in isolation may qualify for Sickness Allowance (or JobSeeker Payment from 20 March 2020) if they do not have any employer leave entitlements, such as sick leave, and they meet general eligibility requirements in respect of residency and income and asset tests.

Young people under the age of 22 who are unable to attend work because they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who are in isolation may qualify for Youth Allowance if they meet the same requirements.

For more information, visit Services Australia www.servicesaustralia.gov.au

What precautions do I need to take?

Standard precautions for preventing infection are always used in care settings when providing health care or personal care. Standard precautions include hand hygiene before and after every episode of physical contact. Use appropriate PPE (including gloves, gown, appropriate mask and eye protection) depending on the anticipated exposure, ensuring good sneeze-cough etiquette and regularly cleaning the environment and equipment



In-home care workers are encouraged to complete the COVID-19 infection prevention and control training module designed for health care workers in all settings.

www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training

Can food and water spread coronavirus?

Some coronaviruses can potentially survive in the gastrointestinal tract. However, food-borne spread is unlikely when food is properly cooked and prepared. With good food preparation and good hand hygiene, it is highly unlikely that you will become infected with coronavirus through food.

Drinking water in Australia is high quality and is well treated. It is not anticipated that drinking water will be affected by coronavirus.

More information

While COVID-19 is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness may be suffering with a cold, allergy or other respiratory illness– not coronavirus.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call **131 450**.

If you or a family member are in crisis, please contact Lifeline on **13 11 14**.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.

